

George Gordon Building  
300 Arch Street (southwest  
corner of Third and Arch Streets)  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1065

HABS  
PA  
51 PHILA  
258-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
*Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings*

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Eastern Office, Design and Construction  
143 South Third Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-1065

## GEORGE GORDON BUILDING

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Address: 300 Arch Street (southwest corner of Third and Arch Streets), Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: The Religious Society of Friends

Present Use: Building vacant, awaiting demolition

Brief Statement of Significance: This cast iron building is representative of the commercial architecture in Philadelphia in the mid-nineteenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: On October 13, 1856, George Gordon, merchant, bought from William F. Headman and Edward Headman and Catharine his wife, merchants, for \$17,000 "... All that certain four story Brick messuage or tenement and lot as piece of ground thereunto belonging situate at the southwest corner of Delaware Third Street and Arch Street formerly called Mulberry Street in the said city containing in breadth on the said Arch Street fifteen feet nine inches and in length or depth on said Third Street thirty seven feet four inches..." and including access and rights to a necessary in the rear.

On March 1, 1922, the property transferred from G. Weaver Loper and Fannie G., his wife, Harry S. Marston and Marie G., his wife, Weaver L. Marston, and the Girard Trust Company, trustees for George Gordon deceased, to Arthur L. Fink. On March 16, 1922, the property transferred from Arthur L. Fink and Lillian E., his wife to W. Edward Pierce and Daniel Henon. On March 31, 1922, the property transferred from W. Edward Pierce and Emma May, his wife, and Daniel Henon and Erma E., his wife to Samuel Gross. On May 16, 1922, the property transferred from Samuel Gross and Lillie, his wife to Harry Roisman and Julius Roisman. On August 1, 1923, the property transferred from Harry Roisman et ux et al. On October 31, 1925, the property transferred from Harry Fine and Minnie, his wife to Joseph Asbell and Samuel Miller. On October 10, 1932, the property transferred

from the Girard Trust Company, trustees for sundry trusts, to Arthur J. Fink. On December 26, 1944, the property transferred from the Girard Trust Company, trustees to Samuel Hirsh and Rose, his wife, who sold it to the Religious Society of Friends in 1962.

2. Date of erection: George Gordon purchased the property, including a four-story brick messuage, on October 13, 1856. That building was demolished shortly thereafter (Public Ledger, November 12, 1856; "The old store at the Southwest corner of Third and Arch has been torn down, and preparations made for putting up another immediately."). The new building was begun promptly (Public Ledger, November 20, 1856; "Mr. George Gordon, jeweler, is constructing a handsome four story iron store on the corner of Third and Arch Streets."). It is thought that the reference to the four-story building is in error since the present fifth story is original.
3. Sources of information:
  - a. Unpublished - Primary  
Philadelphia County (Pennsylvania) Records Department, Philadelphia City Hall. Chain of title extracted from deed books.
  - b. Published - Secondary  
The Philadelphia directories, for the pertinent years, identify Gordon as a watch and jewelry merchant.

Prepared by Osmund R. Overby, Architect  
National Park Service  
July 1961  
and  
John D. Milner, Architect  
National Park Service  
February 1963

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: An example of cast-iron construction, stylish around mid-nineteenth century.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor condition with extensive rust cover on cast iron, iron pieces cracked and broken in many locations.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: Five stories and basement, simple rectangular plan. 15'-9" (2 bays) x 37'-4" (6 bays)
2. Foundations: Brick and rubble masonry
3. Wall construction: The exterior walls on the north and east sides are divided into arcades formed by bolted cast-iron columns (channel section), spandrels and entablatures. The south and west party walls are red brick laid up in common bond.
4. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: None
5. Chimneys: One brick chimney extending up through the south-west corner of the main interior space.
6. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Round arched openings of Renaissance character in detail.
  - b. Windows: Double hung wood sash, four lights over two in round arched openings of Renaissance character in detail; second story windows have heavily ornamented "keystones" and spandrels; detail above fifth story fenestration is simpler and of smaller scale than other floors, subdivided with two windows per bay.
7. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Slight pitch to Third Street; modern bituminous covering.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: High, deeply projecting molded cornice (on north and east sides) supported by consoles at the pilasters.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:
  - a. Basement: Large single space with access from both the first floor and the street level.

- b. First floor: Heavily altered to accommodate a modern luncheonette. Stairway to basement is at the south end of the main space. Stairway to the upper floors is at the south end of the building with access only from the sidewalk.
  - c. Second through fifth floors: Winder stair in the south-west corner of the building. Small utility room in the south-east corner opposite the stair. One large room on each floor entered through a doorway from the stairhall.
2. Flooring:
- a. Basement: Wide floor boards over earth floor.
  - b. First floor: Modern vinyl floor covering over narrow floor boards.
  - c. Second through fifth floors: 5" pine floor boards over 3" x 10" wood joists spanning east-west.
3. Wall and ceiling finish:
- a. Basement: Unfinished
  - b. First floor: Walls and ceiling finished in plaster with decorative sculptured plaster cornice.
  - c. Second through fifth floors: Plaster finish throughout.
4. Doorways and doors:
- a. First floor: Modern
  - b. Second through fifth floors: Doorway between stairhall and utility room and doorway between stairhall and main space. Simple wood trim of the period with paneled doors.
5. Trim: Most of the original wood baseboards, window, and door trim remain in the upper floors. Much of the original trim on the first floor was removed during the alteration.
6. Lighting: Modern electric fixtures throughout.
7. Heating: Modern central heating. Each main space was probably heated by a stove in the south-west corner.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: Southwest corner of Third and Arch Streets. Main front of building faces east on Third Street. Adjoining buildings face west and south (south building razed).
2. Walks, driveways: City streets and sidewalks on east and north sides.

Prepared by Neil Penry, Architect  
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May 1961

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February 1963